

**An Enlightening Commentary
into
The Light
of the Holy Qur'an**

PART 1

**By
A Group of Muslim Scholars**

**Translated by
Mr. Sayyid Abbas Sadr-'āmeli**

**Edited by
Ms. Celeste Smith**

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Sura Al-Fatīḥah (The Opening)

No. 1 (7 Verses)

In The Name of Allah, The Beneficent, The Merciful

Contents of the Sura

The Holy phrase *'In The Name of Allah, The Beneficent, The Merciful'* / bism-il-lāh-ir-raḥmān-ir-raḥīm / is, in fact, mentioned both at the onset of the Qur'ān and at the beginning of every Sura, except Sura 9, (*Sura Taubah - Repentance*). And, since the purpose of *Allah's* Word, i.e. the whole Qur'ān, is to guide people; as *Sura Al-Ma'idah, No. 5, verses 15-16* say : "...Indeed, there has come to you a light and a clear Book from Allah ", " With it Allah guideth him who follows His pleasure to the ways of peace and safety ..."; therefore, this guidance, being a grant and a fundamental principle, begins with *Allah's* Holy Name.

This Sura, among all Suras of the Qur'ān, has an extraordinary radiance which originates from the following merits :

1. The Tone of the Sura :

This Sura, The Opening, in comparison with other Suras of the Qur'ān regarding its tone and melody, has a particular style which is clearly different and extraordinary. The other Suras contain instructions from *Allah*, Who gives commands and admonishments to His servants, but, in this Sura, His words are uttered on behalf of the servants. In other words, in this Sura, *Allah* has taught His servants how to supplicate and speak to Him, simply and without a mediator.

2. Al-Fātiḥah, the Basis of the Qur'ān :

It is narrated that the holy Prophet (p.b.u.h.) has said : " *By the One, in Whose hand is my soul, Allah has not sent down a similar Sura to this Sura (Al-Fatīḥah), neither in the Turah, nor in the Gospel, nor in*

*the Psalms, nor even in the Qur'ān, and it is Umm-ul-Kitāb ";*¹ which means that it is the basis and origin of all excellence.

In fact, besides referring to the Resurrection, this Sura presents facts concerning the Unity of the Divine Essence, Unity of Attributes, Unity of Divine Acts, and Unity of Worship. It is the essence of the whole meaning of the Qur'ān.

It is narrated from Hadrat Amir-ul-Mu'mineen Ali (a.s.) that :
*" All secrets of Allah are in Divine Books; and the contents of all those Divine Books are comprised in the Qur'ān; and what is found in the Qur'ān is condensed in Sura Al-Fāṭiḥah, and what is in Al-Fāṭiḥah is gathered in /bismillāh /, and what is in / bismillāh / is concentrated in /b/, (the first letter of ' Bism-il-lāh ')..."*²

Based on the entirety of great commentators' statements, it is understood that this tradition indicates clearly the importance of both the Holy Qur'ān and /bismillāh-ir-raḥmān-ir-raḥīm / in which science and knowledge, from the beginning to the end, is comprised. The interpreter and elucidator of these sciences is the holy Prophet (p.b.u.h.), and after him there are his true vicegerents including Amir-ul-Mu'mineen Ali (a.s.).³

3. Al-Fāṭiḥah, Magnificent Honour of the Prophet (p.b.u.h.) :

Sura Al-Fāṭiḥah, more so than the other Suras in the Holy Qur'ān, was revealed to the holy Prophet (p.b.u.h.) as a great bounty. It stands on a par with the whole Qur'ān. The seven verses in the Sura sum up the whole Qur'ān : *" And We have bestowed upon thee the Seven Oft-repeated (verses) and the Grand Qur'ān ", (Sura Al-Ḥijr, No. 15, verse 87).* This meaning is also referred to in a narration from Amir-ul-Mu'mineen Ali (a.s.) quoting the Prophet's (p.b.u.h.) tradition who said : *" Verily, Allah, the Exalted, has bestowed (His) favours on me particularly for ' The Opening ' (Al-Fāṭiḥah) and has positioned it on a par with the whole Grand Qur'ān, and surely Fāṭiḥat-ul-Kitāb (the Opening of the Qur'ān) is the dearest (item) in the treasures of the 'Arsh, (Throne of*

1 Majm'ul-Bayān, vol. 1, p. 17

2 Makhzan-ul-'Irfān, Commentary, vol. 1, p. 28 & Maṣābiḥ-ul-Anwār vol. 1, p. 435

3 Manhajus-Ṣādiqin, vol. 1, p. 90

Heaven) ".¹

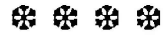
4. The Importance of its Recitation :

The recitation of this Sura, because of its extreme importance, is frequently emphasized in Islamic traditions and narrations.

As for its virtue, it is narrated from the holy Prophet(p.b.u.h.) that: " *The reward of any Muslim who recites the Sura ' Opening ', is like that of a person who has recited two thirds of the Qur'ān, and so much reward would he receive as if he has given every believing Muslim, man or woman, a free will offering* ".²

5. The Titles of the Sura :

There are ten titles given to this Sura, as taken from Islamic narrations and commentary books, thus: *Fāṭiḥat-ul-Kitāb, Umm-ul-Kitāb, Umm-ul-Qur'an, Sab'-ul-Mathānī, Al-Wāfiyah, Al-Kāfiyah, Ash-Shāfiyah, Al-Asās, Aṣ-Ṣalāt, and Al-Ḥamd*.³



1 Al-Burhān Fī Tafsīr-il-Qur'ān, vol. one, p. 21; & Aṭyab-ul-Bayān, vol. 1, p. 83

2 Majma'-ul-Bayān, vol. one, p. 17 .

3 Rauḥ-ul-Janān, Abul-Futūḥ Rāzī, Commentary, vol. one, p. 16

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
Sura Al-Fatihah
 (The Opening)

No. 1 (7 Verses)

- ١ بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
- ٢ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ
- ٣ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
- ٤ مَلِكِ يَوْمِ الدِّينِ
- ٥ إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ
- ٦ اهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ
- ٧ صِرَاطَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ غَيْرِ الْمَغْضُوبِ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا الضَّالِّينَ

Sura Al-Fatihah

(The Opening)

No. 1 (Verses 1-7)

1. " *In The Name of Allah, The Beneficent, The Merciful.*"
2. " *(All) praise is (only) Allah's, the Lord of the Worlds.*"
3. " *The Beneficent, The Merciful.*"
4. " *Master of the Day of Judgement.*"
5. " *Thee (alone) do we worship and of Thee (only) do we seek help.*"
6. " *Guide us (O' Lord) on the Straight Path.*"
7. " *The path of those upon whom Thou hast bestowed Thy bounties,
not (the path) of those inflicted with Thy wrath,
nor (of those) gone astray.*"

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

1. " *In The Name of Allah, The Beneficent, The Merciful.*"

Commentary :

It is a custom among most people of the world to recite the name of one of their great and very beloved personalities that the worthiness of their work might be elevated. That is, they relate that work to that personality from the very beginning of their endeavour.

Among all beings, the One Who is eternal is only *Allah*, and, therefore, everything and every activity should begin with His Holy Name. It should be enveloped in His Light, and help should be always asked only from Him. So, in the first verse of the Qur'an, we recite '*Bism-illāh-ir-Rahmān-ir-Rahīm*', (*In The Name of Allah, The Beneficent, The Merciful*). This action should not be done only with the tongue, but it should be done truly and meaningfully, because this kind of connection with Him sets work in the right direction and keeps it far

from any deviation. For this very reason, such a work will certainly be successful and blessed.

The holy Prophet (p.b.u.h.), in a tradition, has said : " *Any important work that begins without mentioning / bismillāh /, will remain invalid.* " ¹

After narrating this tradition, Hadrat Amir-ul-Mu'mineen Ali (a.s.) added: " *For every action that a person wants to do, he/she should recite / bismillāh-ir-raḥmān-ir-raḥīm /, which means that he/she begins the action with the Name of Allah, and every action that begins with the Name of Allah is blessed.* " ²

On the excellence and importance of / bism-il-lāh /, it is narrated from Ali-ibn-Mūsa-r-Riḍā (a.s.), who has said thus: " *(The holy phrase) 'Bism-il-lāh-ir-Raḥmān-ir-Raḥīm' is closer to 'the Exalted Name of Allah' than the pupil is to the white of the eye.* " ³

Again, Ibn-Abbas narrates from the holy Prophet (p.b.u.h.) thus: " *As soon as a teacher tells a child to say 'Bism-il-lāh-ir-Raḥmān-ir-Raḥīm' and the child says it, Allah records immunity (from fire) for the child, his or her parents and the teacher.* " ⁴

Imam Ṣādiq (a.s.) has said: " *No Holy Book ever came down from heaven but that it began with 'Bism-il-lāh-ir-Raḥmān-ir-Raḥīm'.* " ⁵

In 'Khiṣāl' by Shaykh Ṣadūq it is cited that Imam Bāqir (a.s.) has said: " *... When we begin an action, great or small, it is appropriate to recite /bism-il-lāh-ir-raḥmān-ir-raḥīm/ and that action may be blessed.* " ⁶

In short, the stability and permanence of an action is due to this very relation to *Allah*.

The phrase / bism-il-lāh / at the start of the Sura, teaches us to seek the help of *Allah* from His pure perfect Essence when we begin any action. That is why *Allah*, the Exalted, in the first verses revealed to the holy Prophet (p.b.u.h.) instructed him to – initiating the

1 Bihār-ul-Anwār, vol. 76, chapter 58, p. 305 (according to ' Taf̄sīr Al-Bayān ', vol. one, p. 461)

2 Bihār-ul-Anwār, vol. 76, chapter 58

3 Majma'-ul-Bayān, vol. 1, p. 18

4 Ibid

5 Al-Maḥāsin by Barghī p. 40 & Bihār-ul-Anwār, vol. 92, p. 234

6 Taf̄sīr-ūṣ-Ṣafī, vol. 1, p. 70 & Al-Mizān, vol. 1, p. 26 (Persian version)

proclamation of Islam – perform this great task with the Name of *Allah*: " *Proclaim in the Name of your Lord...*", (**Sura Al-'Alaq, No. 96, verse 1**); and the words of Noah (a.s.) to his followers, at the time of the Flood are: " *So he said: 'Embark ye on the Ark, in the Name of Allah, whether it moves or be at rest! ...* " (**Sura Hūd, No. 11, verse 41**). Again, Solomon's letter to the Queen of Sheba begins, thus: " *It is from Solomon, and is (as follows): 'In The Name of Allah, The Beneficent, The Merciful'* ", (**Sura An-Naml, No. 27, verse 30**).

Based on the same principle, all of the Suras of the Holy Qur'an, (except **Sura At-Taubah, No. 9**) begin with / bism-il-lāh /¹ in order to pursue the essential aim of guiding man and leading him to prosperity with success, far from getting a taste of defeat.

In any event, when we begin our work with reliance upon the Supreme Power of *Allah*, Whose Power is above all power, we feel, psychologically speaking, far more powerful; therefore, we may be more confident. We may try more, be more persevering, and more courageous in challenging with difficulties, more hopeful, and, similarly, our intentions and the essence of our actions may be more purified. At the time of beginning any affair, reciting the Name of *Allah* is the secret to its success.

To whatever extent we further explain this verse, it will still be seen insufficient, because, according to a narration, Haḍrat Ali (a.s.), regarding the commentary of the verse, talked to Ibn-Abbas from the beginning of a night until the next morning, but it was only for the commentary of /b/, the first letter of / bism-il-lāh-ir-raḥmān-ir-raḥīm /.²



Explanation :

Is the Phrase 'Bism-il-lāh' a Part of Each Sura ?

Almost all Islamic scholars unanimously hold the opinion that / bism-il-lāh-ir-raḥmān-ir-raḥīm/ is, as was stated before, a part of Sura

1 The phrase /bism-il-lāh/ is used as a contraction of /bism-il-lāh-ir-raḥmān-ir-raḥīm/.

2 Makhzan-ul-'Irfān, vol. 1, p. 28

Al-Fātiḥah and, also, of the other Suras of the Qur'ān (except Sura At-Taubah, No. 9). In essence, the inclusion of /bism-il-lāh/ at the beginning of all Suras of the Holy Qur'ān, except the above mentioned one, is a vital piece of evidence bearing witness to this very fact, and the belief is so firm that no change has been made in the Qur'ān and nothing has been added to it since it was revealed to the Prophet of Islam (p.b.u.h.).

Mu'āwiyat-ibn-'Ammār, one of the companions of Imam Ṣādiq (a.s.), said that he had asked the Imam whether he should say /bism-il-lāh-ir-raḥmān-ir-raḥīm / at the beginning of Sura Al-Fātiḥah when he stood for prayer, and he (a.s.) replied: " Yes ". He had questioned him (a.s.), again, as to if he should recite /bism-il-lāh/ when Sura Al-Fātiḥah ended and before reciting the next Sura. Then, Imam Ṣādiq (a.s.), again, answered: " Yes ".¹

Dār Quṭnī, a Muslim learned researcher, according to a sound document, narrates from Amir-ul-Mu'mineen Ali (a.s.) that someone asked him (a.s.): " *What is As-Sab'-al-Mathānī (Seven Verses)?* " " *It is Sura Al-Ḥamd* ", he (a.s.) answered. The man said: " *Sura Al-Ḥamd consists of six verses* ". He (a.s.) replied: " *' Bism-illāh-ir-Raḥmān-ir-Raḥīm ' is also one verse.* " ²

Moreover, Muslims have always preserved the practice of reciting / bism-il-lāh-ir-raḥmān-ir-raḥīm / at the beginning of every Sura (except Sura 9) when reciting the Holy Qur'ān, and it has been proven, on numerous accounts, that the holy Prophet (p.b.u.h.) used to recite it, too.

It has been said that Amir-ul-Mu'mineen Ali (a.s.) was asked to say whether / bism-il-lāh-ir-raḥmān-ir-raḥīm / was a part of Sura Al-Fātiḥah. He (a.s.) answered: " *Yes, the Messenger of Allah used to recite it and considered it one verse (of the verses) of the Sura, and he said that ' Fātiḥat-ul-Kitāb (The Opening) is the same as ' Sab'-al-Mathānī ' (seven verses),* " ³



1 Al-Kāfī, vol. 3, p. 312

2 Al-Itqān, vol. 1, p. 136

3 Atyab-ul-Bayān, vol. 1, p. 92

Allah, the Most Inclusive Name of God

The term / ism / in the phrase / bism-il-lāh /, as men of letters in Arabic literature say, is originally derived from / sumuww / with the meaning of 'height, elevation'. The reason why any 'noun' is called by an 'appellation' is that after choosing to call a 'noun' by the particular given 'name' (ism), the hidden meaning of the expression appears, and the sense of the 'name' is elevated, therefore forsaking meaninglessness.

In the phrase / bism-il-lāh /, the word *Allah* is the most complete and comprehensive name among the Lord's many names. This is because each of *Allah's* names, which are found in the Holy Qur'an, as well as in other Islamic sources, truly reflects one particular aspect of *Allah's* Attributes. In other words, the only name that refers to all of His Attributes of Glory and Beauty, is *Allah*. That is why other names are often used as modifiers for the word '*Allah*'. For example, "*Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful*", (Sura Al-Baqarah, No. 2, verse 226), refers to *Allah's* forgiveness; "*...Allah heareth and knoweth all things*", (No. 2, verse 227) shows His being well-acquainted with what is audible and what comes to pass, respectively; "*And Allah sees well all that you do*", (Sura Al-Hujurat, No. 49, verse 18) states that He has information on every thing that is done by anyone; "*Surely Allah is He Who gives (all) sustenance, the Lord of Power, steadfast (for ever)*", (Sura Ath-Thariyat, No. 51, verse 58) points to His giving sustenance to all creatures and, at the same time, discloses that He is powerful and firm in His actions.

And, finally, Sura Al-Hashr, No. 59, verses 23,24 reveals some other Attributes of *Allah*. The terms 'Creator' and 'Evolver' are suggestive of His creativeness and inventiveness, and 'Bestower of Forms' indicates His giving shapes: "*Allah is He, than Whom there is no other god;—the Sovereign, the Holy One, the Source of Peace (and Perfection), the Guardian of Faith, the Preserver of Safety, the Exalted in Might, the Irresistible, the Supreme (in creating all creatures)...*" "*He is Allah, the Creator, the Evolver, the Bestower of Forms, to Him belong the Most Beautiful Names...*"

Another piece of evidence which is a clear indication that this Name, *Allah*, is all-inclusive is that the acceptance of Faith, in Islam, is

possible only by reciting the sentence: / lā ilāha illallāh / " *There is no god, but Allah* "; and each of the other phrases such as: ' All-Knowing ' or 'Creator ', or ' Bestower of Sustenance ', and the like, alone, is not sufficient enough to proclaim as evidence of Monotheism in Islam. And, that is why in religions other than Islam, the God of Muslims is referred to as ' *Allah* ', because it is only Muslims who use ' *Allah* ' to refer to what they do worship.



Allah's General and Specific Mercy:

The words '*ar-Raḥmān*' (The Beneficent) and '*ar-Raḥīm*' (The Merciful) are adjectives, both derived from '*ar-Raḥmah*' (Mercy). The former word, the Beneficent, as it is popularly recognized among some commentators, refers to the General Mercy of *Allah* which is bestowed upon all creatures, among them are the believers and the disbelievers, good-doers and evildoers. And, as we can see, the Divine bounties of life are distributed everywhere and all human beings enjoy the endless merits therein. This is their sustenance. They draw it out of the abundant blessings encompassing the whole world of existence.

The word '*ar-Raḥīm*' (The Merciful) refers to that Specific Mercy that is endowed upon the believing, obedient servants alone. The believers, because of their true belief, good actions, and faithful active obedience, deserve this special, exclusive mercy, of which the disbelievers are deprived.

The particular fact ratifying this topic is that the word *Raḥmān* is always used in the Qur'ān with the meaning of an infinite form of mercy, which is a sign of its generality, while the word *Raḥīm* is sometimes used with the meaning of a finite form, which is a sign of its specificity such as: "... *And He is full of Mercy to the Believers* ", (**Sura Al-Aḥzab, No. 33, verse 43**). And it is sometimes used in an infinite form such as in Sura Al-Fātiḥah.

A narration from Imam Ṣādiq (a.s.) says: " *Allah is the God of all things and is Beneficent to all His creatures, and He is Merciful, especially*

to the believers."¹

Therefore, at the moment that we initiate any action, when we begin with the Name of Allah, we must seek His Mercy, General and Specific Mercy, both.

It is interesting to note that this power, which has a broad concept much the same as gravitational pull, and has the ability to draw hearts closer together, is the very Attribute of Mercy. This Attribute of Mercy is the very means by which men can attain a close relationship with the Creator, also.

That is why true believers, when reciting the holy verse /bism-il-lāh-ir-raḥmān-ir-raḥīm/, at the beginning of their affairs, detach their hearts from everything else and rely only upon *Allah*, and seek help only from Him, because He is the only One Whose Mercy is 'All-Encompassing' and no creature is deprived of it.

Another fact that can also be understood from / bism-il-lāh / is that *Allah's* acts are based on Mercy, and, punishment has an exceptional aspect which will not be fulfilled unless there are some exact, clear reasons for it.

When we recite the supplication entitled, ' Jaushan Kabir ', Section 20 thus : " *O'Lord, Whose Mercy surpasses His Wrath...* " the above point becomes clear.

Human beings should attach importance to mercy and affection and behave accordingly in their daily lives and use violence and harshness only for those times when it is clearly warranted.

We conclude this discussion with a tradition, rich in meaning, from the holy Prophet (*p.b.u.h.*), who, when commenting on the many different kinds of His All-Encompassing Mercy, said : " *Verily, there are one hundred mercies belonging to Allah, from which, He has sent down to the Earth only one and distributed that one among His creatures. All the mercy and affection they have, issue from it. He, the Merciful, withheld the other 99 for Himself to show mercy upon His servants on the Day of Resurrection* ".²

1 Kāfi, Tauḥīd by Ṣaḍūq, and Ma'ānī-yul-Akhbār, (according to Al-mizān Commentary).

2 Majma'-ul-Bayān, vol. 1, p. 21

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ

" (All) praise is (only) Allah's, the Lord of the Worlds "

Commentary :

The World is Full of His Mercy

After reciting the phrase / *bism-il-lāh-ir-Raḥmān-ir-Raḥīm* /, to begin the Sura, our first duty is to bring to mind the Great Creator and Cherisher of the world of being, and His endless bounties which have surrounded us thoroughly. In doing so, it is both '*a guide*' for us to observe the existence of Providence and '*a motive*' for showing our servitude and worship to Him.

It is '*a motive*' because any man, after receiving a gift, wishes to know its giver at once, in order to show his gratitude and thankfulness to him. This quality is in man's innate disposition prompting him to manifest his acknowledgment of Him.

This same quality in man, in discussing the theological motives of '*the necessity of expressing thankfulness to the Bestower*', according to what man's nature and rationale leads him to, is considered one of those motives.

And it is '*a guide*' to knowing the Lord and His bounties, because the best and the most direct way towards the acknowledgment of the Origin is the study of the secrets of creation, especially, the existence of the bounties of life as related to human beings.

Therefore, perhaps, it is for these two reasons that **Sura Al-Fātiḥah**, alongside /*bism-il-lāh*/, begins thus: " (All) praise is (only) Allah's, the Lord of the Worlds ".

Or, in other words, the verse " (All) praise is (only) Allah's, the Lord of the Worlds " points to both the Unity of Divine Essence, and the Unity of Divine Attributes and Acts.

Originally, qualifying *Allah* (s.w.t.), here, with the phrase /*rabb-il-'ālamīn*/ (the Lord of the Worlds) is, in fact, mentioning the reason after stating the claim. It seems that someone has asked why all praise is (only) *Allah's*, and the response is that it is for the reason that

He is '*the Lord of the Worlds*'.

This is one of the characteristics of *Allah*. In another occurrence, the Holy Qur'an says: "*He Who has made every thing which He has created most good ...*," (Sura As-Sajdah, No. 32, verse 7).

And again, in Sura Hud, No. 11, verse 6, it says: "*There is no moving creature on the earth but its sustenance depends on Allah...* ".

It is, also, clearly understood from the word /al-ḥamd/, '*praise*', used in this verse, that *Allah* has created all these bounties and benefits, basically, by His Choice and His Will.

It is interesting to note that by stating the phrase, '*(All) praise is (only) Allah's*', it is not only helpful to use it for the commencement of affairs, but, as the Qur'an teaches us, it is also used as a conclusion, like in Sura Yunus, No. 10, verse 10, about the good-doers in Heaven, it says: "*(This will be) their cry therein: 'Glory to Thee, O God!' And 'peace' will be their greeting therein! And the close of their cry will be: 'Surely, the Praise is Allah's, the Lord of the Worlds!'*".

Virtue of the Verse

Concerning the virtue of this Holy verse, there is a narration from Imam Sādiq (a.s.) which says that in a tradition from the Prophet (p.b.u.h.), he has said: "*When a believing servant says 'The Praise is (only) Allah's, the Lord of the Worlds', such a praise that befits Him and His Rank, the angels are unable to record it. They will be asked by Allah why they did not record the reward of the phrase which the believing servant stated. Then, in response to their not recording the reward, they will ask how it is that they could even understand and estimate the high standard of saying such a phrase which contains the praise befitting and deserving only to Him. Allah, the Exalted, will tell them that they should record the phrase and it would be for Him to endow the servant with the reward of the praise as befitting Him*"¹.

The word /rabb/ originally means '*the owner of something who proceeds to train and improve it*'.

This word is absolutely applied to *Allah*, alone, and if it is

¹ Ma'āni-ul-Akhbār, p. 32, tradition 8; and, Tafsir Furāt-ul-Kūfī, vol. 1, p. 52

applied, in Arabic, for other than Him, it is certainly used in a possessive form, as / rabb-ud-dār / '*the owner of the house*', or / rabb-us-safīnah / '*the owner of the ship*'. In any case, the word, itself, conveys the meaning of '*training*'.

There is another idea mentioned in Majma'-ul-Bayān that says: " /rabb/ means: '*an important person whose orders are obeyed*'." However, it is probable that both meanings refer to the same origin.

The term /ālamīn/ is the plural form of /ālam/ '*the world*' and we cite it, here, with the meaning of 'a collection of different creatures with common characteristics or a common time and place'. For example, we say: the world of Man, the world of animals, and the world of plants, or, we say: the world of the East and the world of the West, or: the world of today and the world of yesterday. Therefore, when /ālam/, which has a plural sense by itself, is used in a plural form, it refers to the 'universe'.

The writer of the Al-Manār Commentary says that it is narrated from Imam Ṣādiq (a.s.) that he has said /ālamīn/ means 'peoples', only. Then, the writer adds that the term is used in the Qur'ān with the same meaning; for example: "...*That it may be an admonition to all peoples*", (Sura Al-Furqan, No. 25, verse 1).¹

It is true that the term /ālamīn/ in many occurrences, in the Qur'ān, is used with the meaning of 'peoples', but, sometimes, it is also used with a broader scope of meaning which envelops other creatures; for instance: "*Then Praise be to Allah, Lord of the heavens and Lord of the earth, -Lord and Cherisher of all the worlds!*", (Sura Al-Jathīyah, No. 45, verse 36). And, also, like: "*Pharaoh said: 'And what is the Lord and Cherisher of the Worlds?' (Moses) said: 'The Lord and Cherisher of the heavens and the earth, and all between them ...'*", (Sura Ash-Shu'ara No. 26, verses 23,24).

It is interesting that in a narration from Ḥaḍrat Ali (a.s.), Ṣadūq has cited in the book 'Uyūn-ul-Akhhbār', that he (a.s.), commenting on the verse, has said: "*(The phrase) /rabb-il-ālamīn/ refers to all creatures whether they are inanimate or living*".²

There is, of course, no contradiction between these traditions,

1 Al-Manār Commentary, vol. 1, p. 51

2 Nūr-uth-Thaqalayn Commentary, vol. 1, p. 17

because, although the meaning of the term /'ālamīn/ is very vast, Man is the most significant being among all creatures of the world, so, he is sometimes especially considered the central point of them, and other creatures are dependent upon him and in his shadow. Therefore, when, in the tradition of the Imam (a.s.), the term is rendered into 'peoples', the reason is that the main purpose of creation, in this great gathering of beings, is Man.

This point is, also, interesting that some have introduced two forms of /'ālam/ 'the world': 'the great world' (*macrocosm*) and 'the lesser world' (*microcosm*) by which they refer to Man as 'the lesser world', because the entity of a person alone, is a collection of different powers which govern 'the great world'. In fact, 'man' is a sample of the whole world. So Amir-ul-Mu'mineen Ali (a.s.) in one of his poems, addressing Man, says: "*You think that you are a small body, while (you should know that) you contain 'the great world' (macrocosm) inside you.*"¹

One of the factors that causes us to emphasize the vast meaning of /'alām / 'the world', is that the term has occurred after the phrase /al-ḥamd-u-lil-lāh/, in which we devote all the praise to *Allah*, only, and, then, we reason our statement with /rabb-il-'ālamīn/ 'The Lord of the Worlds'. We say the praise is only *Allah's*, because all perfections, all bounties and all blessings, in this world, belong to Him, the Lord, the Cherisher.

الرَّحْمَنُ الرَّحِيمُ

"The Beneficent, The Merciful."

Commentary :

The meaning of /ar-raḥmān/ 'the Beneficent' and /ar-raḥīm/ 'the Merciful', together with their broad sense of meaning and the difference between them, was explained at length while commenting on /bism-il-lāh/, the repetition of which is not required.

¹ From the collection of Poems of Amir-ul-Mu'mineen Ali-ibn Abiṭālib (a.s.), p. 175

A point that should be added to the commentary, here, regarding 'ar-Raḥmān' and 'ar-Raḥīm', is that these two attributes, which are the most significant attributes of *Allah*, are repeated at least 30 times, every day, in our (5) daily prayers; (twice in *Sura Al-Fātiḥah*, and once in the Sura we recite after it). In this way, we praise *Allah* sixty times as being 'Merciful' each day.

This, indeed, is a lesson taught to all human beings more than anything else that they should try to acquire this attribute, and practice it in their daily lives and activities. Moreover, it points to the fact that if we count ourselves among the true, obedient servants of *Allah*, we should not follow or imitate the manner in which tyrant slave owners use against their servants when dealing with our servants.

The history of slavery indicates that the tyrant owners used to treat their slaves in horrifyingly cruel ways. For example, if a slave moved a little slow in performing services, he would receive harsh punishments: i.e. be whipped, put in chains or fetters, fastened to a mill-stone and forced to turn it, instructed to work in mines, imprisoned in deep, dark, wet holes and, if his faults were greater, he would be hanged.

Another reference in the history of slavery also shows that condemned slaves were put in wild animal cages. If the slave succeeded in staying alive, another animal would be let in on him.

These are some examples of the conduct of some owners with their slaves. But, *Allah*, the Lord of the Worlds, has mentioned repeatedly, in the Holy Qur'ān, that *Allah* is Oft-Forgiving and Most Merciful to the servants who are repentant of their disobedience to Him. For example: **Sura Az-Zumar, No. 39, verse 53** says: " Say: ' O' My servants who have transgressed against their souls! Despair not of the Mercy of Allah: for Allah forgives all sins, for He is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful' ".

Therefore, the terms 'ar-Raḥmān' (the Beneficent) and 'ar-Raḥīm' (the Merciful) used after the phrase /rabb-il-'ālamīn/ 'the Lord of the Worlds' refer to the idea that, He, with the absolute Power He has, is yet Merciful to all His creatures. This quality, which *Allah* possesses, attracts His servants to Him and they eagerly say: '*ar-Raḥmān-ir-Raḥīm*', (the Beneficent, the Merciful).

It is here that one's attention is drawn to the fact that the behaviour of *Allah*, the Exalted, toward His creatures is, by far, different from that of masters toward their servants, in particular, during the horrible period of slavery.

Therefore, 'belief in *Allah*' is the first of the five principles of Islam.

مَلِكِ يَوْمِ الدِّينِ

"Master of the Day of Judgement."

Commentary :

'Faith in the Resurrection', the Second Principle

In this verse, attention is paid to the second important principle in Islam, i.e. Resurrection and the Hereafter when it says:

"Master of the Day of Judgement."

Thus, the focus of the idea of the Origin and End, which is the main foundation of all ethical and social improvements in Man, reaches the peak of perfection.

It is noteworthy, here, that the mastership of *Allah*, or His Ownership, is pointed out, which illustrates His Sovereignty and Domination over everything and everyone on that Day, when all human beings will attend that Great Court for reckoning, before their real and genuine Master. They will see all their deeds and even their thoughts present without there being aught less than the original or anything forgotten. They will even have to accept their share of responsibility for any customs for which they have merely been the founders of, not necessarily the doers of them.

Allah's Ownership, on that Day, is not similar to our imaginary ownership of that which belongs to us from the things of this world. His Ownership, regarding the world of existence, is the real ownership. It is the special dependence of creatures on the Lord and their being in need of Him. If the flow of His blessings ceased even for a single moment, it

would cause them to perish altogether.

In other words, this ownership is the consequence of His Creatorship and Divinity. He, Who creates beings, gives them life every moment and cherishes them, protects them and guides them, is the real master of all creatures. As a matter of fact, He is the only Ruler of all powers in the world of existence.

There is no doubt that *Allah* is 'The Lord of the Worlds'. The question to be raised here is this: 'Is not *Allah* the Absolute Owner of this world?' versus our statement to this effect that 'He is the Master of the Day of Judgement'. The answer to this question lies in the fact that the '*Ownership of Allah*', though it comprises both worlds, enjoys further manifestation in the Hereafter. This is because all material ties and imaginary ownerships are cut off (in the Hereafter), and no one has anything of his or her own on That Day. Even intercession, if ever achieved, is by *Allah's* command, as the Qur'ān says about the Reckoning Day: "*The Day on which no soul shall have aught for (another) soul, and the command That Day shall be (wholly) Allah's*", (Sura Al-Infīṭār, No. 82, verse 19).

In other words, occasions arise, in this world, when one helps another through his or her speech, money, power, advocates, plans, designs, and so on. On That Day (the Hereafter), however, certainly not a single trace of such affairs will exist. Therefore, when people are asked: "*Whose will be the Domination This Day ?...*", they answer: "*... that of Allah, the One, the Almighty!*", (Sura Al-Mū'mīn, No. 40, verse 16). This is also an answer to those who reject the idea that when *Allah* is the Owner of everything why, then, He is called the '*Master of the Day of Judgement*'.

Man, with no belief in the Hereafter and the Day of Reckoning, would have the potential to be the most immoral of beings, the biggest tyrant committing the worst and the most hideous crimes, for, in his view, there is not any one to question or punish him if he is clever enough not to get caught and, with such characteristics, sometimes, it would be so terrible or impossible for other fellow-creatures to continue their lives in this world. Therefore, faith in life after death and the Day of Judgement, which is an essential part of Islam, like prayer, is very helpful in controlling men against committing sins.

Emphasizing the Ownership of *Allāh* on the Day of Judgement has this effect, too, that it stands against the disbelief of disbelievers in the Hereafter. It is understood from the verses of the Holy Qur'ān that Faith in *Allāh* has been a common belief even among disbelievers in the Age of Ignorance. **Sura Luqman, No. 31, verse 25** says about them: " *If thou ask them, who it is that created the heavens and the earth, they will certainly say: 'Allah'...*", while they did not accept the speech of the Prophet (p.b.u.h.) about the Resurrection: " *The Unbelievers say (in ridicule): 'Shall we point to you a man that will tell you, when ye are all scattered to pieces in disintegration, that ye shall (then be raised) in a New creation ?' "* " *Has he invented a falsehood against Allah, or has a spirit (seized) him ?...*", (**Sura Saba, No. 34, verses 7,8**).

A tradition from Imam Sajjād (a.s.) says: " *When Ali-ibn-il-Husayn (a.s.) began reciting 'Master of the Day of Judgement', he repeated it so many times that he was at the point of losing his life* ".¹

The phrase /yaum-id-dīn/, is repeated more than ten times in the Qur'ān, exclusively with the meaning of 'the Hereafter': " *And what makes you know what the Day of Reckoning is ?' "* " *Again, what makes you know what the Day of Reckoning is ?' "* " *The Day on which no soul shall have aught for (another) soul, and the command that Day shall be (wholly) Allah's* ", (**Sura Al-Infīṭār, No. 82, verses 17-19**).

The phrase /yaum-id-dīn/ is used in the sense of 'the Day of Judgement', for 'That Day' is the day of rewards; and /dīn/ in Arabic philology means: '*reward, recompense*'. The most evident procedure fulfilled in the Hereafter is the procedure of paying rewards or inflicting punishments. On That Day, the curtains will be removed and the deeds of all will be reckoned, precisely, and everyone shall reap the fruit of his own actions, be they good or evil.

Imam Ṣādiq (a.s.) said in a tradition that the Day of Judgement is '*The Reckoning Day*'.²

It is also noteworthy to mention that some commentators believe that '*Resurrection*' is called /yaum-ud-dīn/ because on That Day, everyone is recompensed for his own religion, if he has followed it accordingly.

1 Nūr-uth-Thaqalayn, Commentary, vol. 1, p. 19

2 Majma'-ul-Bayān, vol. 1, p. 24 ; &, Manhaj-uṣ-Ṣādiqīn, vol. 1, p. 24

إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ

" *Thee (alone) do we worship and of Thee (only) do we seek help.*"

Commentary :

Man in the Presence of Allah

Here, this verse is a start for a servant to plea and ask his needs from *Allah*. In fact, from here on, the tone of the statements changes. The former verses were the praise and attributes of *Allah*, and the statement of Faith in His Pure Unity, consisting of a confession to the belief in the Day of Resurrection. But, from this verse on, it seems that the servant, with that firm foundation of Belief in the knowledge of *Allah*, sees himself in front of Him, the Pure Essence. He addresses Him and speaks, firstly, about his own worship for Him and, then, about His help which he seeks from Him. Thus he says:

" *Thee (alone) do we worship and of Thee (only) do we seek help.*"

In other words, when the concepts of the former verses settle in one's soul, and his entire entity is enlightened with the Light of *Allah*, the Cherisher of the Worlds, and when he recognizes His ' *General Mercy* ' and ' *Specific Mercy* ', the individual transforms into a complete person from the point of ' belief ' and ' Faith '. The prime fruit of this deep belief in monotheism, for a person, in one respect, is to be a pure true servant of *Allah*, free from any idol and idolatry, far from tyrants and lusts; and, on the other hand, to seek help only from His Pure Essence.

In fact, the former verses state the Unity of Essence and Attributes, while, here, the statement is regarding the Unity of Worship and Unity of Acts.

' *Unity of Worship* ' means that we acknowledge no person or thing worthy of worship other than *Allah*, Whose commands alone do we obey and Whose laws only do we follow, avoiding any kind of servitude and submission to other than Him, the Pure Essence.

' *Unity of Acts* ' means that we clearly recognize Him as the only real ' *Author of Causes* ' in the world. It does not mean that we would

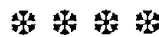
refuse the world of 'cause' and be neglectful of searching for the causes of things, but it means that we would believe that any effect from any cause is under His command. It is He Who has given heat to fire, light to the sun, and vivacity to water.

The outcome of this belief is that one relies on *Allah* alone, and knows that all authority and power are His only. In his view, other than Him is powerless, mortal and perishable.

Allah is the only Essence to be relied on and worshipped. It is only He Who is deserving of man's reliance for everything.

This kind of thought and belief sets man apart from any one or any thing else and joins him only to *Allah*. He obeys *Allah* even when he pursues after 'the world of ways and means', i.e. he sees the Power of *Allah*, the Cause of causes, in control of the means.

This belief elevates the soul of man so high and the scope of his thought so broad that it reaches eternity and becomes free from any limited circumstances, in so far as, Haḍrat Amir-ul-Mu'mineen, the Master of the Virtuous, Ali (a.s.), regarding *Allah*, says: "*I worship you neither for the fear of the Fire (of Your Hell) nor for the desire of Your Paradise, but I found You fit for worshipping and I worshipped You.*"¹



Explanation :

Allah : the Only Site of Reliance

According to the Arabic literature, when the object of the verb precedes its subject, in that language, the meaning of exclusiveness is understood, and, here, the word / iyyāka / 'Thou' has preceded the words / na'bud / 'we worship' and / nasta'in / 'we seek help' which indicates exclusiveness in which its result is the very Unity of Worship and Unity of Acts that were explained before. Even in our own worship, we need His help for which we must ask Him. We may be involved in self-conceit, deviation, hypocrisy and similar things, which

¹ Bihār-ul-Anwār, vol. 72, p. 186

destroy our worshipping and servitude totally. Then, in all affairs and activities, our full attention should be exclusively on *Allah*, the Exalted.

In other words, this, in itself, is one of the stages of monotheism, a high stage of it, which is rendered into 'monotheism in speculation'. That is, one should always and in all circumstances, think of *Allah* only. He should rely exclusively on *Allah*. He should fear nothing but *Allah*; and he should trust *Allah* only. He should see nothing save *Allah*; he should want nothing save *Allah*; and he should love none save *Allah*. As the Qur'ān says: "*Allah has not made for any man two hearts in his (one) body...*", (Sura Al-Aḥzab, No. 33, verse 4).

The Social Aspect of Worship

The pronoun 'we', which is in the plural form, used in terms / na'bud / '*we worship*' and / nasta'in / '*we seek help*', and in the next verses, shows that worship, especially prayer, is based on 'plural' and community.

The servant must consider himself among the community even when he is standing in front of *Allah* for invocation, much less during his other daily activities.

Thus, from the point of view of the Qur'ān, any individualism, solitariness, and the like are not accepted in Islam. Particularly, the ritual prayer, from the prayer call: /ḥayya 'alaṣ-ṣalāt/ '*hasten to the prayer*', which is an invitation to initiate prayer, to Sura Al-Ḥamd at the beginning of the prayer, and the term /assalāmu 'alaykum.../ '*peace be on you all...*' at the end of the prayer, all are statements of verification to the concept that this worship basically has a social aspect; viz, it ought to be performed as a congregational prayer. It is true that the prayer performed individually is also accepted in Islam, but personal worship is considered as the secondary degree.

We Ask Allah for Help in Confronting Forces

We have to confront different forces in this world, both the forces in nature and our innate, or inborn natural forces. To be able to challenge with these destructive, misleading factors, we need to be helped. Hence, we shelter under the protective umbrella of *Allah*. We

get up every morning and repeat the verse / 'Īyyāka na'budu wa 'Īyyāka nasta'īn / *(Thee (alone) do we worship and of Thee (only) we seek help)* to confess our servitude to *Allāh* and to ask His Pure Essence help to make us successful in this great challenge. We do the same in the evening before we go to bed. We get up in the morning with His remembrance, and we go to bed in the evening with His remembrance, and each time we ask help from His Pure Essence. What an excellent state this is for the person who is in this stage of Faith! He never bows to any tyrant. He never loses himself for the attraction of material gain, and as the Qur'ān reveals about the Prophet of Islam (*p.b.u.h.*), saying: "... Truly, my prayer and my service of sacrifice, my life and my death, are (all) for the Cherisher of the Worlds ", (*Sura Al-An'am No. 6, verse 162*).

Therefore, the recitation of this Holy Sura may provide the solution to all problems in our lives. It has plenty of properties which can bring us to safety. An example is from a narration cited by one of the companions of the Prophet (*p.b.u.h.*). He said that in one of the battles, he was with the Messenger of *Allāh* (*p.b.u.h.*). When the fight became difficult, he (*p.b.u.h.*) lifted his head and said: " O' Master of the Day of Judgement! Thee (alone) do we worship and of Thee (only) we seek help ". At that moment the army of enemies was defeated and (many of them) were killed while the Prophet (*p.b.u.h.*) and Muslims won.¹

It is stated in another narration: " When a difficulty arises for a believing servant, and he recites this Holy verse, it will become easy for him".²



أَهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ

" Guide us (O' Lord) on the Straight Path."

Commentary :

After confessing his obedience and servitude to *Allāh*, reaching

¹ Kanz-ul-'Ummāl, vol. 4, p. 36 (taken from Tafṣīr-i-Baqāwī, and 'Amāl-ul-Yaum wal-Laylah)

² Manhaj-uṣ-Ṣādiqīn, Comentary, vol. 1, p. 114

the state of worship, and asking for help from Him, the first thing that the servant seeks is His guidance to the '*Straight Path*', the path of the righteous, the path of Justice, and the path of Faith and good deeds. So, he asks the Lord, Who has bestowed on him all of these bounties, to give him the bounty of 'guidance', too.

Such a man, in the above stated condition, is a believing one who is acquainted with the Lordship of his Lord, but it is possible, too, that suddenly he would cease to receive this bounty because of some component of wickedness, and, consequently, he would stray from the Right Path.

Therefore, he must ask his Lord, at least ten times a day, to protect him from any kind of aberration.

Moreover, this '*Straight Path*', which is the very Divine creed, has some stages. All people are not on the same level of spiritual preparedness necessary for attaining these stages. Whatever stages a person attains, there are still some higher stages above them that a believing servant might ask *Allah* to guide him to reach.

Here, a question arises: "*Why must we always ask Allah for guidance to 'the Straight Path', as if we are being misguided ?*".

Besides, supposing the statement is true about us, the ordinary believers, but what about the holy Prophet and sinless Imams (*p.b.u.th.*) who were the examples of complete human beings ? In answer to this question, we may say :

Firstly, the fact is that Man is liable to deviate from the Right Path with each step that he takes as he is walking along the path of guidance. So, he should rely on *Allah* and ask Him to keep him firm on the '*Straight Path*'.

We must not forget that our existence, our being, and all the bounties which always come to us, are from His Origin. To clarify the matter, we cite a simple example :

All creatures, including human beings, (from one point of view) resemble an electric lamp. We see that the light of a lamp, when it is on, appears to be constant and monotonous. The reason is that the electrical current flows constantly from a generator to the lamp. The generator continuously produces some new electrical power, a part of which reaches the lamp by some connective wires. Our being is similar

to the lamp. Although it appears as a sustained being, it is, in fact, a continually renewed being that flows ceaselessly to us from the Original Being, the Bountiful Creator.

Therefore, as the continually new being reaches us, we need constant new guidance, too. It is natural that if something wrong or some barriers manifest themselves in our spiritual connective wires with *Allah*; the vices, injustice, wrong doings, etc., will disrupt our connection with the Origin of guidance. At that moment, we may deviate from the 'Straight Path'.

We ask *Allah* that these barriers be removed and not obstruct our way that we may remain steadfast along the 'Straight Path'.

Secondly, receiving 'guidance' is the same as travelling the path of 'development' along which man can gradually promote from lower degrees to higher and higher ones.

We also know that the path of development is endless and continues towards 'infinity'.

So, it is no wonder that even the prophets and sinless Imams (*p.b.u.th.*) ask *Allah* to guide them to the 'Straight Path', because the Absolute Perfection is *Allah* and all of us, without any exception, are on the path of perfection, then it is acceptable that they, too, ask Him for higher promotions.

Do we not often send greetings to the holy Prophet (*p.b.u.h.*) by the special formula of 'Ṣalawāt'? Does 'Ṣalawāt' not have the meaning of requesting new blessings from *Allah* for Prophet Mohammad and his descendants (*p.b.u.th.*)?

Is it not expressed in the Qur'an regarding the Prophet (*p.b.u.h.*) who used to say: "... *O' my Lord ! advance me in knowledge*", (Sura Tāhā, No. 20, verse 114) ?

Does the Holy Qur'an not say: "*And Allah doth advance in guidance those who seek guidance...*", (Sura Maryam, No. 19, verse 19) ? And, again, does it not say: "*But to those who receive guidance, He increases the (light of) Guidance, and bestows on them their piety and restraint (from evil)*", (Sura Muhammad, No. 47, verse 17) ?

This explanation makes clear the answer to the question regarding the benediction which we recite for the Prophet and the sinless Imams (*p.b.u.th.*) by which we beseech *Allah*, in fact, for a higher and better

position for them all (*p.b.u.th.*).

Here are two traditions which make the above idea clearer :

Amir-ul-Mu'mineen Ali (*a.s.*) commenting on the verse '*Guide us (O' Lord) on the Straight Path*', says: "*It means: '(O' Lord) continue bestowing Your blessings on us as You did during the days passed by which we succeeded to obey You, so that we can obey You in the future of our lives, too* ' " ¹

Imam Ṣādiq (*a.s.*) has said about the verse: "*It means: '(O' Lord) show us the way which ends in Your love, leads us to Your Paradise, and prevents us from following our destructive desires or our own wrong and destroying decisions* ' " ²



What is the 'Straight Path' ?

According to what is understood from the verses of the Holy Qur'ān, the 'Straight Path' is the same as the 'Monotheistic Creed'; the religion of Truth and the belief in the instructions of *Allah*, as **Sura Al-'An'am, No. 6, verse 161** says: "*Say: 'Verily, my Lord hath guided me to a way that is straight, — a religion of right, — the path (trod) by Abraham the true in faith, and he (certainly) joined not gods with Allah* '."

Here, 'a religion of right' and 'the theistic path of Abraham (*a.s.*) as the true faith', in which he called on no god but *Allah*, are introduced as the 'Straight Path'. This shows 'the belief' aspect.

But, **Sura Yāsīn, No. 36, verses 60 and 61** say: "*Did I not enjoin on you, O' ye children of Adam, that ye should not worship Satan; for that he is to you an enemy avowed ?* " "*And that ye should worship Me, (for that) this is the Straight Way ?* " These verses, here, point to the 'practical' aspects of the 'religion of truth'. They urge us not to commit any Satanic deed or any wrong action.

Clinging to *Allah*, the Qur'ān says, is the key to reaching the 'Straight Path': "... *Whoever holds firmly to Allah will be shown a Way that is straight* ", (**Sura 'Al-i-'Imrān, No. 3, verse 101**).

It is necessary to mention this point, that the 'Straight

1 Biḥar-ul-Anwār, vol. 2, p. 254; and. Tafsīr uṣ-Ṣāfi, vol. 1, p. 72

2 Ma'āni-ul-Akhbār, p. 484

Path ' is always only one way, not more than that, because the shortest distance between two points is always only one straight line.

Therefore, when the Qur'an says that the ' Straight Path ' is the very true belief in the Divine religion with its moral and practical aspects, it is because it is the shortest route to a spiritual connection with *Allah*.

And it is also for this same reason that 'the religion of truth' is not more than one: "*The Religion before Allah is Islam (submission to His Will)...*", (Sura 'Al-i-'Imran, No. 6, verse 153).

Later it will be made evident that 'Islam' has a vast meaning which envelops all the monotheistic religions that were lawful at their own times but were nullified by the new one. Thus, it clarifies that all different commentaries that commentators have cited on the matter, i.e. the ' Straight Path ', refer, indeed, to the same thing.

Islam, the Pure Unity, Qur'an, the Prophet, and his vicegerents (*p.b.u.th.*), are some explications that commentators have offered for the meaning of the ' Straight Path '. All of the stated explications refer to the Divine religion in the aspects of ' *Faith* ' and ' *practice* '.

Also all of the various narrations and traditions cited on the subject in the Islamic sources, each of which points to a separate dimension of the question, in substance, refer to one essence. Some examples are as follows :

It is narrated from the holy Prophet (*p.b.u.h.*) who has said: "*The 'Straight Path' is the path of prophets and they are those on whom Allah hath bestowed His Grace*".¹

Here are three traditions from Imam Ṣādiq (*a.s.*), who, when commenting on this verse, said: "*It is the 'way' and the 'cognizance' of Imamate*".²

Again, in another tradition, he (*a.s.*) says : "*By Allah, we (Ahlul-Bait) are the ' Straight Path '*".³

Another tradition from the same Imam (*a.s.*) says: "*The ' Straight*

1 Nūr-uth-Thaqalayn, vol. 1, p. 20, tradition 86

2 Ibid, p. 21, tradition 88

3 Ibid, tradition 89

Path ' is Amir-ul-Mu'mineen Ali (a.s.) ".¹

Ahmad-ibn-Mohammad-ibn-Ibrāhīm Al-Tha'labī, a Sunnī scholar, has narrated from Abū-Buraydah Al-Aslamī, who was one of the companions of the holy Prophet (p.b.u.h.), that he said: " *The ' Straight Path ' is the path of Mohammad and his descendants "*.²

This means that their path is based on the doctrine of Islam which consists of the belief in: 'Oneness of *Allah*', 'Justice', 'Prophethood', 'Imamate', and the 'Hereafter'. There is no doubt that the path of Ahlul-Bait (p.b.u.th.) is the ' Straight Path', and that adhering to it causes prosperity and salvation, while pursuing other than that leads to loss and injury.

Ibn-il-Maḡāzilī has narrated from the holy Prophet (p.b.u.h.) who has said: " *The example of my household (Ahlul-Bait) is similar to the Ark of Noah. He who embarked it was rescued (from drowning and destruction), but, he who refused it drowned (and perished) "*.³

Other traditions narrated from Ahlul-Bait (p.b.u.th.) also confirm the concept. In addition, the well-known tradition ' Thaḡalayn ' from the holy Prophet (p.b.u.h.), is another good clear witness to the matter, too. It says: " *I leave behind me amidst you two Great things; should you be attached to these two, never, never shall you become astray: the 'Book' of Allah (the Holy Qur'ān) and my progeny, my 'Ahlul-Bait ' "*.⁴

As was previously stated, it is certain that the holy Prophet (p.b.u.h.), Hadrat Ali-ibn-Abiṭālib (a.s.) and all of the other infallible Imams (a.s.) invited people to the theistic religion of *Allah*, an invitation to Faith and practice in truth, which elevates Man to the climax of ability, guidance, dignity, and human excellences.

By the way, it should not be neglected that there are two kinds of guidance: ' Divine Guidance ' and ' Religious Guidance '.

' *Divine Guidance* ' is the human intelligence bestowed on a person by *Allah*, which recognizes the difference between: good and bad, right

1 Ibid, tradition 94

2 Bihār-ul-Anwār, vol. 24, p. 16 & Manhaj-uṣ-Ṣādiqīn, vol. 1, p. 116

3 Bihār-ul-Anwār, vol. 23, p. 124, tradition 50

4 Iḥqāq-ul-Ḥaqq, vol. 9, pp. 309- 375

and wrong, gain and loss, felicity and wretchedness, virtue and vice, and so on. It is, in fact, the inner messenger of a person.

‘*Religious Guidance*’ means that *Allah* sends prophets, Divine Books and legislation to guide Man to all merits of this world and the next, as well as making him aware of the injuries and damages of the two worlds. Of course, when Man is guided by the above guidance and acts accordingly, he will be worthy of receiving the blessings of the next world; this is made possible through the development of the soul by acquiring knowledge, good habits, and commendable moral qualities in which state he will certainly attain the happiness of this world and that of the next, together with the infinite grace of *Allah*.

‘Intellect’ is called a ‘guide’ in that it enlightens man as to what is right and what is wrong. The Prophets (*p.b.u.th.*), Imams (*a.s.*), and scholars are called ‘Guides’, too, because they guide the human race to the salvation and felicity in both worlds. But, really, *Allah* is the main Supreme Guide, and these are the means appointed for the guidance of Man.

صِرَاطَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ غَيْرِ الْمَغْضُوبِ عَلَيْهِمْ
وَلَا الضَّالِّينَ

" The path of those upon whom Thou hast bestowed Thy bounties,
not (the path) of those inflicted with Thy wrath,
nor (of those) gone astray."

Commentary :

Two Paths of Deviation

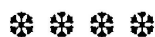
This verse is, indeed, a clear illustration of the ‘Straight Path’ which was dealt with in the previous verse. It says that the person asks *Allah* to guide him onto the path of those on whom He has blessed with many kinds of bounties; (such as the blessings of guidance, success, the leadership of people of truth, knowledge, good actions, holy

wars and martyrdom); not those who deserved His wrath because of their wrong doings, nor those who neglected the right path and went astray.

*" The path of those upon whom Thou hast bestowed Thy bounties,
not (the path) of those inflicted with Thy wrath,
nor (of those) gone astray."*

In fact, we are not familiar with the method of guidance, so the Lord's command, in this verse, is that we ask for the path of the prophets, good doers and all of those to whom *Allah* has extended His bounties, blessings and favours.

It also warns us that there are two deviated paths in front of us: the path of those inflicted with His wrath, and the path of those gone astray.



Explanation :

1- Who are ' Those upon whom Allah has bestowed His bounties ' ?

Sura An-Nisa, No. 4, verse 69 has introduced these people, thus: *" All who obey Allah and the Apostle are in the company of those on whom is the Grace of Allah, – of the prophets (who teach), the Sincere (lovers of Truth), the Witnesses (who testify), and the Righteous (who do good): Ah ! What a beautiful Fellowship ! "*

As it demonstrates, this verse introduces the people on whom the bounties and Mercy of *Allah* are bestowed. They are four groups: the Prophets, the Sincere, the Witnesses, and the Righteous.

These four states may refer to an idea that: for the attainment of a sound, progressive and faithful society, prophets and Divine leaders should form the foundation.

After the prophets are the sincere truthful missionaries and preachers whose words attest to their actions by which they are able to extend the prophets' missions throughout their societies.

Following this period of the formation of these structural states, naturally, some evil-minded individuals, who serve as barriers on the path of truth, may appear in the way. There should be some others to stand against them. In this struggle a few of these defenders of truth may be gifted with martyrdom, whose blood would then water the tree of ' Theism '.

The fruit of these struggles and devotions is yielded as 'the Righteous' with whom the society can be pure, efficient, and abounding with spirituality.

Therefore, in the Holy Sura Al-Fāṭiḥah (The Opening), we are encouraged to repeatedly ask *Allah*, during the day and night, that we be led on the path of these previously mentioned four groups, and, obviously at each time, we must emphasize with sincere effort and endeavour, on one of these four states more than the others in order to perform our duty and mission well.

2- Who are the Last Two Groups in this Verse ?

The separation of these two groups from each other indicates that each group has some defining characteristics.

To make distinction between these two groups, there are three commentaries:

A) From the application of these two words in the Qur'ān, it is so understood that /maqḍūbi 'alayhim/ *'those inflicted with His Wrath'* are in a worse condition than /ḍāllīn/ *'those gone astray'*. In other words, 'those gone astray' are the ordinary misguided and /maqḍūbi 'alayhim/ 'those inflicted with His Wrath' are the misguided who are obstinate or hypocritical. And, for these two very reasons, the Curse and Wrath of *Allah* have been cited towards them in frequent occurrences in the Qur'ān. The followings are some instances :

"... But such as open their breast to Unbelief, – on them is Wrath from Allah, ...", (Sura An-Nahl, No. 16, verse 106).

" And that He may punish the Hypocrites, men and women, and Polytheists, men and women, who imagine an evil opinion of Allah. On them is a round of Evil; the Wrath of Allah is on them. He has cursed them and got Hell ready for them: and evil is it for a destination ", (Sura Al-Fath, No. 48, verse 6).

However, this group, ie. *'those inflicted with His Wrath'* were those who, besides their unbelief, pursued the path of obstinacy and enmity against *Allah*, and whenever they could, they even injured the Divine leaders and prophets (p.b.u.th.). As Sura 'Al-i-'Imran, No. 3, verse 112 says: *"...They draw on themselves Wrath from Allah, and pitched over them is (the tent of) destitution. This because they rejected the*

Signs of Allah, and slew the Prophets in defiance of right; this because they rebelled and transgressed beyond bounds ".

B) Some of the commentators believe that /ḍāllīn/ 'those gone astray' refers to the misguided of the Christians; and /maḍḍūbi 'alayhim/ 'those inflicted with His Wrath' refers to the misguided of the Jews.

This idea was formed because of the particular responses that these two groups showed in reply to the invitation to Islam. For, as the Qur'ān has clearly pointed out in different verses, the misguided Jews used to show a special grudge and enmity against the invitation of Islam, though, at the beginning, their scholars and learned men were the bearers of the glad tidings of Islam. Very soon, though, under the effect of deviation of thought, belief and notion, and, also, because their financial gains were being endangered, they became the most obstinate enemies of Islam and they did whatever evil they could against the progression of Islam and Muslims. (Even today, Zionism and Zionists hold the same position regarding the manner in which they treat Islam and Muslims.)

Therefore, to render these people as 'those inflicted with His Wrath' seems very correct.

But, the misguided of the Christians, who upon encountering with Islam were not so grudging, but were misled because of their misperception of the Divine religion and therefore refusing the Truth, were rendered into /ḍāllīn/ 'those gone astray'. They believed in the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost instead of clinging to true Monotheism, the worship of *Allah*. This is, in itself, one of the greatest examples of 'astray' and 'aberration'.

In the Islamic traditions, too, /maḍḍūbi 'alayhim/ 'those inflicted with His Wrath' are interpreted as the Jews, and /ḍāllīn/ 'those gone astray' as the misguided of the Christians. The foundation of this interpretation is the same as was mentioned in the above.

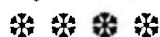
C) It is also probable that /ḍāllīn/ 'those gone astray' refers to those who are misguided but do not insist on making others go astray, while /maḍḍūbi 'alayhim/ 'those inflicted with His Wrath' refer to those who both 'go astray' and 'lead others astray'. They try vigorously to change others to become like themselves.

The references to this meaning are the verses that introduce the

persons who obstruct the way of guidance of others and are mentioned in the Holy Qur'ān as 'those who would hinder (men) from the Path of *Allah*'. **Sura Ash-Shura, No. 42, verse 16** says: "*But those who dispute concerning Allah after He has been accepted, – futile is their dispute in the sight of their Lord: on them is Wrath, and for them will be Penalty terrible*".

Other traditions have also been cited concerning the matter, including a narration from Amir-ul-Mu'mineen Ali (a.s.). It says: "*Everyone who has disbelieved in Allah, on him is Wrath, and he is astray from His Path*".¹

In 'Ma'ānī', a book of traditions, it is narrated from the Prophet (p.b.u.h.) who said: "*Shi'ah (the followers) of Ali (a.s.) are those on whom Allah has bestowed the bounty of 'Wilāyat', love of Ali-ibn-Abiṭālib (a.s.); His Wrath is not on them, and they are not on the wrong path*".²



Supplication :

O' Lord! Count us not among 'those inflicted with Your Wrath' and 'those gone astray', but consider us among true believers, the followers of the school of Ahlul-Bait (a.s).

O' Lord! Guide us on the Straight Path in our every circumstance and in all our affairs!

O' Lord! We thank you for this Divine blessing and say : "Praise belongs to Allah (alone) Who set us among those holding steadfast to the love of Ali-ibn-Abiṭālib and the other immaculate Imams (a.s.)."

The End

Sura Al-Fātiḥah
(The Opening)

¹ Tafsir-uṣ-Ṣāfi, vol. 1, p. 74

² Ma'ānī-ul-Akhbār, p. 32, tradition 8; and, Tafsir Furāt-ul-Kūfi, vol. 1, p. 52

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In The Name of Allah, The Beneficent, The Merciful

Sura Al-Baqarah

(The Cow)

No. 2 (286 Verses)

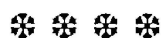
Contents of the Sura

This Sura contains 286 verses, rendering it the longest Sura in the Holy Qur'an. It is indisputable that this Sura was not revealed all at once, but partially and in increments as necessitated by the various Islamic social circumstances and conditions found at different times in Medina. But, the fact is that the inclusiveness of this Sura from the point of Islamic doctrine in Faith and many practical issues (social, political, economical, and religious) is not deniable, for, there are various subjects discussed in it, including the followings :

1. There are some discussions about Monotheism and gaining knowledge of *Allah*, especially by way of studying the mysteries of creation.
2. There are many statements about the Resurrection and life after death with a few tangible examples, like the story of Abraham (a.s.) and how the birds became restored to life, and the story of Ezra.
3. There are some facts about the inimitability of the Qur'an and the significance of this Heavenly Book.
4. There are long discussions and explanations concerning the Jews and hypocrites and their peculiar positions against Islam and the Qur'an, evidenced by their various mischievous hindrances against them.
5. There are some narrations about the history of the Great Prophets, including Abraham (a.s.) and Moses (a.s.) in particular.
6. There are some passages that contain a few Islamic rules

related to varying subjects, such as : prayers, fasting, Holy War on the path of *Allah*, the pilgrimage to Mecca, the change of the Qiblah (the direction of prayer) from Jerusalem to Mecca, marriage and divorce, commerce, debt, and a great many of the ordinances concerning usury. Donation for the sake of *Allah*, is abundantly discussed. The problem of retaliation, the banning of different kinds of forbidden meat, and also gambling and wine drinking are discussed, in addition to a few other ordinances related to the subjects of writing wills, testaments, and the like.

The appellation '*Al-Baqarah*' (the Cow), the title of this Sura, is taken from the story of the Israelites' Cow, mentioned in verses 67 to 73 of this Sura, whose description will be explained later in this very commentary (on pages 208 to 213).



The Virtue of Studying this Sura :

There are some significant traditions and narrations on the virtue of studying this Sura, cited in Islamic literature, including the followings:

The Late Ṭabarsī has so cited in Majma'-ul-Bayān that once the Prophet (p.b.u.h.) was asked : "*Which Sura of the Qur'ān is the best ?*" He (p.b.u.h.) answered : "*Al-Baqarah*". They asked : "*Which verse of the Sura (is the best) ?*" He replied : "*Āyat-ul-Kursī, the 'Verse of the Throne', (verse 255)*".¹

The superiority of this Holy Sura is, apparently, due to its comprehensiveness, and the preference of the '*Verse of the Throne*' (verse 255) is because of its special monotheistic content, which will be dealt with later in this commentary.

It is not contrary to the fact that some other Suras of the Qur'ān are considered superior in other aspects. All the Suras of the Qur'ān have been considered from different points of view.

Again, it is narrated by Aḥī-ibn-il-Ḥusayn (a.s.) that the Prophet (p.b.u.h.) said : "*He who recites the first four verses of Sura Al-Baqarah, the 'Verse of Throne' (verse 255) with its next two verses (256,257) together*

¹ Nūr-uth-Thaqalayn, vol. 1, p. 26; & Majma'-ul-Bayān, vol. 1, p. 32

with the last three verses of the Sura, will not meet any trouble in himself, in his family members, and in his wealth; and Satan will not approach him, and he (having paid attention to the Qur'an in his life) will not forget the Qur'an".¹

Also, ' Ubayy-ibn-i-ka'b quotes from the holy Prophet (p.b.u.h.) thus : "*He who recites this Sura (Al-Baqarah) will be encompassed by the bounties of Allah and His Mercy; and He will reward him as much as that of a person who has fought fearlessly on the path of Allah for one year*".² Then, the Messenger of *Allah* (p.b.u.h.) added that Muslims should study this Sura, know it, and do it accordingly in order to be benefited by the Mercy of *Allah* in this world and the next.

Imam Ja'far Ṣādiq (a.s.) is narrated to have said : "*He who recites Al-Baqarah and 'Al-i-'Imrān, these two Suras will come above his head on the Day of Judgement like two clouds similar to two umbrellas, (and will protect him from the heat of That Day)*".³

Here, it is necessary to mention the important fact that those rewards, virtues and significant compensations that have been cited for studying the Qur'an or some special Suras and verses of the Qur'an never meant that one simply should be contented with the fact that one has recited them as invocations.

On the contrary, the recitation of the Qur'an is for understanding, and understanding is for contemplation, and contemplation is for action.

As a matter of fact, every virtue, which is mentioned for a Sura or a verse, corresponds very much with the contents of that Sura or verse. For example, among the virtues of reciting Sura An-Nūr, No. 24, we see that it says that *Allah* may protect the person and his children from committing adultery and slander when he perseveres in studying it.

This consequence is because the contents of Sura An-Nūr contains some important instructions on resisting sexual deviations; i.e. the instructions advising single persons to hasten to marriage; the instructions about 'cover' (ḥijāb); the instructions about refraining from ogling and desirous looks; the instruction that forbids spreading any

1 Thawāb-ul-A'māl (according to the citation of Nūr-uth-Thaqalayn vol. 1, p. 36).

2 Manhaj-us-Ṣādiqin, vol. 1, p. 120; & Majma'-ul-Bayān, vol. 1, p. 32

3 Al-Burhān Fī Tafsīr-il-Qur'ān, vol. 1, p. 52

rumours and accusations about others; and, finally, the instruction on executing the punishment for fornication and adultery upon any perpetrators : be they men or women.

It is obvious that when the content of this Sura be observed by the members of a society or a family, the iniquity of adultery will not appear therein. It is the same concerning the verses of Sura Al-Baqarah, mentioned above. They are all related to the subject of Monotheism, belief in ' *Qayb* ' (the Invisible), knowing *Allah*, and resisting evil temptations. So, if a person recites them and observes the instructions in them carefully and from the depths of his soul, he will certainly obtain those virtues.

It is certainly true, however, that the recitation of the Qur'an deserves rewards, but, besides the original and essential rewards given by *Allah*, its effects on personal behavior will exist only when this recitation is a premise for contemplation and action.

